

Appropriations Committee
Public Hearing – February 21, 2017
H.B. No. 7027 AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM
ENDING JUNE THIRTIETH 2019, AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS THEREFOR.

William Morales
Boys & Girls Club of the Lower Naugatuck Valley

Good Evening my name is William Morales, I am 17 years old and have been a Club Kid since I was just 5 years old. I also stand here before you today as the 2016 Boy of the Year.

As a young boy, I looked at my Boys and Girls Club of the Lower Naugatuck Valley as only a facility that I attended after school. I would have never thought that it would become the place that I would meet so many positive kind hearted kids and most importantly, it would change my life. Now, attending the Boys and Girls Club for about 12 years and becoming a staff member, I have learned and now view my Club as a place of achievement, opportunity, prosperity and most importantly, guidance. Throughout my years attending the club it has brought me from being a kid who everyone thought would be just another nuisance in the world, to a young man that the younger generation look up to wanting to grow up like me and staff who are proud of the accomplishments I have achieved proving to them people can change.

Out of the many troubles I've faced in life-people have turned their backs on me, but my Club family was always there.

The obstacles I have had to face in life have not been easy, but I have learned from them. Growing up, I was a kid who stayed to himself. I was shy and thought it was okay to do what everyone else was doing to fit in. All I had was my Club family and a dream to play baseball. My friends from my neighborhood surrounded themselves with a terrible environment—from seeing kids fighting on the street, to selling and using drugs, vandalism and other crimes that would land them in jail; I knew staying involved with the Club will give me a better future rather than hanging in the streets. Being introduced to my Club for the first time was like walking into a dream land. I could feel the warmth and love traveling through the Club and instantly knew that this place would be where I want to spend my life.

When I came into those blue doors, I was so surprised by how many kids were in one place. I ran so fast down those stairs to get to the gym and as soon as I looked through the window, I saw over a hundred kids playing together and having fun like they were a big happy family—everything I have always wished for. Attending the Club constantly, each day I often could not wait to see everyone at the Club and be able to share another great day of memories.

I had counselors that would play with me, care for me and be my friend. I was also surrounded by my peers that were involved in more positive choices. Spending about 12 years at the club hand I also grew confidence in myself which helps me continue to grow as a person and help me grow as an athlete to exceed anyone's expectations they've had on me.

Regardless of all the hardships I ignorantly chose to involve myself in and no matter how many times I never wanted to listen to the people who truly cared—my club family never gave up on me. I was told by people in my life that I wasn't good enough or that I am too short which made me doubt myself and build anger inside that I couldn't express anywhere else except the club. This made me act disrespectful and getting myself sent home for putting my hands on other children. I expected people to turn their back on me and give up on leading me in the right direction—but I was wrong. The staff that never left my side held my hand through my hardships and because of them; I gave myself the chance to grow. Because of the love and guidance my Club family has shown me, I stand before you today as a respectful, mature and responsible young man. I have been given many chances to transform from the boy I was to a young man that can represent and be the face of what the Boys & Girls Club stands for. My Club has taught me that if opportunity isn't knocking—to build my own door.

If you ask me what my Club means to me—I could not tell you. There are no words to express my gratitude to my Club and all that it has done for me. My opportunities continue to be absolutely endless. I dedicate my time to my education, playing baseball, the Keystone Club and also the children I work with each day.

I was always picked up when I was down and can now confidently encourage myself to never give up because I know I have people behind me that believe in me, even more than I believe in myself. As my journey with my Boys & Girls Club continues, endless opportunities await and are calling my name. My Club has become my second home and the people within my Club have become my family. I am forever indebted to my Club and all that it has done for me; showing me that everyday is an opportunity to better myself and that there is always room for growth.

My road to success began at MY Boys & Girls Club, and I am proud to announce that I will be continuing my education at Southern New Hampshire University in the Fall majoring in psychology with a scholarship to play baseball. This opportunity would not have been possible if I didn't learn at an early age, what dedication and grit was and what it truly meant that anything is possible if you put your mind to it.